

REMARKS OF
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NOVEMBER 18, 2004

Introductory Remarks

- Good morning!
- Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations. Many of their directors are here. I appreciate all of your hard work to expand services for older adults and their caregivers. I also appreciate your advocacy, your accomplishment and our partnership.
- I also want to thank Lynn Friss Feinberg, Adrienne Dern, and Katryna Gould for being with us today. We are looking forward to hearing from you later in this briefing.
- We are here today to celebrate caregivers. I want to take a moment to thank our family caregivers, who are strengthening American's families with their compassionate and loving sacrifices.

- November is National Family Caregivers Month, and so it is fitting that today we're able to discuss a number of reports and data that point to the many strides we're making, and have made as a nation, to improve the lives of older Americans and their families.
- Our first priority is and will continue to be serving older Americans and keeping them independent. We are now honored in serving caregivers directly and we are committed and will continue to help them care for their loved ones.
- But it works both ways. Just as our efforts to serve caregivers help elderly individuals remain independent, what we do as a society to improve the well-being of elderly people reduces the burden of care on the families who love them.
- Today, you'll hear new data about the well-being of older people in general, and about new findings that illustrate our work in serving family caregivers.

- Our accomplishments are significant. Over the past four years, President Bush and Secretary Thompson have implemented numerous measures to keep our older Americans healthy and to support families in their caregiving roles.
 - The President oversaw the most significant overhaul of the Medicare program since 1965, giving seniors new benefits, including preventive benefits, which will help delay the onset of disease.
 - We are implementing the President's New Freedom Initiative, which is promoting full access to community life for people with disabilities. This includes a significant investment in home and community-based care. (\$68.7 billion in home and community-based waivers between 2001-2004, and \$183.5 million through Real Choice Systems Change Grants).
 - All of us across the entire government are hard at work to implement the President's Executive Order on

Transportation Coordination, “United We Ride,” which is reducing barriers to community-based transportation.

- The President’s FY 2005 budget includes tax relief for Americans who need long-term care, and individuals who care for these family members in their homes.
- The President has also supported legislation to give American workers more options, like flex-time, to help them juggle the demands of work and family responsibilities, and coverage options, like Health Savings Accounts, to help Americans save for their future health care needs.
- At the Administration on Aging, we have invested in innovative approaches to meeting the needs of older Americans and family caregivers through the Aging and Disability Resource Centers, the Evidence-Based Prevention Programs, and our Integrated Care Management Grants. We are also doing it through our core nutrition and supportive

service programs, and the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

- We are making a difference. Later today a report will be released entitled, *“Older Americans 2004: Key Indicators of Well-Being,”* which reveals that most older Americans are healthier, wealthier, on better financial footing, and better educated than previous generations.
- In a few moments, Frank Burns will highlight some of this data, and will discuss our success in reaching caregivers through the National Family Caregiver Support Program.
- But there is much more to be done. We are standing at a unique juncture in history. An unprecedented number of people are planning for their own retirements, and many of them have already taken on caregiving responsibilities. You see seniors and baby boomers are taking charge of their future. We must seize this opportunity with a re-energized agenda.

- We need to look beyond programs, and think creatively about how we can help people access the information and supports they need to make the right choices for themselves, and for their loved ones.
- At HHS, we talk a lot about health literacy. Seniors, baby boomers and caregivers need to be more than health literate. They need to think about the roles they play now, and the roles they may play in the future.
- They need to think not only about retirement incomes, but also about health care, housing and long-term supports they may need in the future.
- As policymakers, we need to think creatively about how technology can facilitate the efficiency of our response and improve the quality of care. Technology will be the key to helping seniors and caregivers access the information they need to make informed choices.

- We also need to focus greater efforts on our minority populations – reducing health disparities, improving prevention and promoting healthier lifestyles. It is time for action. These are the most difficult to reach populations, and yet they are in the most need.
- You have all heard me talk about my vision of long-term care for the future. We are moving ahead with a new agenda—long-term living-- for a new generation of seniors and caregivers. This agenda emphasizes better planning, better long-term care options, more consumer-friendly systems, flexibility in developing those systems, and using our best science and technology to make it all happen.
- I am excited about the future. I look forward to working with you as we move this new agenda forward.
- I will now turn this over to Frank, who will talk in greater detail about the successes of the National Family Caregiver Support Program, and new data on the well-being of older adults.